

Bush River Community Council

November 21, 2011 Meeting Minutes

The November 2011 meeting of the Bush River Community Council (BRCC) was called to order by the Chairman, John Paff, at 6:36 p.m. in the Anita C. Light Estuary Center small meeting room, Otter Point Road, Abingdon, MD, on November 21, 2011. In attendance were Councilwoman Mary Ann Lisanti, Councilman Guthrie, Captain Christopher Swain, Harford County Sheriff's Office, a member of the community: Mr. Fred Silva, and Bush River Community Council Board members: Chairman John Paff, Vice Chair Larry Carmichael, JoWanda Lucas, Randy Conlan, Kathleen Leary and Secretary Mary Starks. Board members Harry Webster, Carolyn Shea, and Glenn Dudderar were absent.

Chairman Paff opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking them for coming. Captain Swain was still unable to provide the crime report due to problems with implementing the new automated system. He recommended that we utilize the web site www.crimereports.com and input the neighborhood to keep abreast of current information. He did provide some statistics: burglaries are up 5% from last year, but 50% down from the same month last year. Bel Air and Joppatown have problems with vehicle thefts; our area is relatively safe from this type of crime. He is researching the new owners of the Perrywood Gardens Apartments in Perryman to determine whether the new owners will be interested in upgrading the living conditions there. During the past year, the current owners have increased patrols and plan to increase hours over the holidays in that neighborhood. The County Sheriff's office has approximately 5 vacancies and 100 applicants for those jobs. Larry Carmichael, the Vice Chair of the BRCC Board mentioned that he and his wife were driving and a deer ran into their car. He wanted to assure Captain Swain that the county Sheriff's deputy was very efficient and helpful to them during the ordeal.

Chairman Paff described the new Harford County government "app" for smart phones and Ipads by which problems in the county can be reported immediately. It seems to be a more efficient means of contacting the county government, but anyone who does not own a smart phone or Ipad can contact the county via their web site on the internet.

Vice Chair Carmichael reported that he has had success working to "clean up" certain properties along Route 40 in our community. The sagging, dilapidated sign for Clark Turner's Water's Edge project has finally been removed and the State Planning and Zoning representatives have been in touch with the mechanic across Route 40 from the 7-11 store on the corner of Long Bar Harbor. Hopefully, he will be complying with state law about using the shoulder of Route 40 to expand his customer parking lot and removing from his property, the unsightly junk easily seen from the highway.

Mr. Conlon, discussed an issue regarding Harford County Parks and Recreation Department soccer field responsibility and scheduling. He discovered a well-maintained soccer field near the Rite Aid Distribution Center in Perryman and called Parks and Red to find out how and when to schedule their use. Apparently, Rite Aid owns the field, but turned the use over to the county. However, when Mr. Conlan contacted the Churchville Parks and Recreation office as he was instructed, he was told that the use of this field is scheduled and determined by Churchville Parks & Recreation which collects fees and that the field is already booked continually by two private soccer leagues. The leagues pay the Churchville office for the use of the field and also pay \$7,000 to maintain it as a soccer field. There is

much concern about the original agreement between the county and Rite Aid and why Churchville is managing and benefiting monetarily from a soccer field located in Perryman. Councilwoman Lisanti and Chairman Paff plan to research this situation further.

A discussion followed on the interest in additional recreation areas within the Bush River Community. There was a concern that there is no public water access. Councilman Guthrie corrected this since the Otter Point boat ramp is available to the public and Flying Point Marina is available in Edgewood. Vice Chair Carmichael announced that the Historical Society is interested in developing the Bush area along Rte 7 as a passive park with nature trails and information about the historical significance of the location. He will follow up and prepare a report for a future meeting. Another location was suggested on Cranberry Road which winds through a marshy, wetland. Other suggestions were a National Water Trail and John Smith Water Trail. There was concern about opening natural wetlands nurturing endangered plant and animal wildlife to the public. People who do not have a stake in the area (they do not live there) may not be as concerned about trash and garbage clean up, noise pollution and crime. The county needs volunteer citizens to “adopt a park, road etc.” because there are insufficient funds to deal with the ever-increasing littering as Harford County becomes more populated. In the recent past, a walk along the Havre de Grace Promenade and park revealed plastic bottles and grocery bags, half eaten food, cups, etc. Councilwoman Lisanti said that is why research and planning is so important in determining what types and locations would be appropriate for additional public recreation in our community. The suggestion to use the Aberdeen High School running track which has lights was not useful because it is too far away from the Bush River Community. Councilwoman Lisanti suggested we all read carefully the 2012 Master Land Use plan for the Bush River/Abingdon community. She provided a copy for the Chairman to review and he sent the web site to the board for viewing it electronically.

The next topic on the agenda was redistricting planned for Harford County in three years and the Bush River Community, specifically. From Long Bar Harbor down Rte 40 West through Otter Point and down to Edgewood will no longer be in District F, represented by Ms Lisanti. Those neighborhoods will now be included in the Edgewood/Joppatown district A, represented by Mr. Guthrie. We will have two councilpersons attending our meetings in the future. Mr. Guthrie came into the meeting as the discussion concluded. He described two laws he is working on: one to require crabbers to use biodegradable lines on their crab pots, eliminating risk to boats and wildlife and the other to require plastic bottles to require a 5 cent deposit encouraging them to be returned rather than thrown away – it takes 600 years for a plastic bottle to disintegrate.

Councilwoman Lisanti spoke about the Obesity Prevention Program she is working on including education, access to healthy food, and environmental infrastructure such as walking, running, bicycle paths, gyms, and other physical activity centers.

Ms Lucas raised grave concerns about the living conditions in Perrywood Gardens. She toured some units with Senator Nancy Jacobs and found health-threatening mold, pests, plumbing leaks and other poor living conditions. The owner representative was not enthusiastic about improving them and there are concerns about livability in these apartments. The county government is reviewing the Livability Codes and considering ways to put “teeth” in the enforcement of them. Concerns are raised that it is difficult to get the tenants to complain and therefore difficult to resolve the living conditions. Further effort will be required.

The Draft Minutes from October were completed last month and will be provided to the board by the Chairman electronically for approval at the next meeting.

Also, a question was raised on the follow-up of an issue of railroad ties washing up on the shores of the Bush River. Councilwoman Lisanti commented that Amtrak representatives have not been as cooperative as she would like on other issues. Chairman will pursue this issue.

By early scheduling and publicizing of important topics and speakers for our meetings, the council hopes to encourage increased citizen attendance. Scheduled topics include:

Monday, December 19, 2011- a presentation/ Q&A by the Harford County Department of Planning and Zoning

Monday, January 16, 2012 - a presentation/Q&A by the Harford County Department of Water and Sewer

February 20, 2012 – a presentation/Q&A by civilian employees responsible for implementing the Aberdeen Proving Ground Restoration Program.

Future plans include State reps and/or Anita C. Leight reps to discuss the environmental health of the Bush River.

With no further questions or issues raised, the Chairman thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the meeting at 8: 40 pm.

Submitted by:
Mary Starks
Secretary
Bush River Community Council